

The Oriental Annual[s]: Colonial Representations of Indian life and Culture

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Abstract

This paper highlights how two early nineteenth-century British colonial writers Rev. Hobart Caunter and Thomas Bacon represented Indian life and culture in *The Oriental Annual[s]*. The *Oriental Annual* was the common title given to a series of seven volumes, which were published every year between 1834 and 1840. Combining anecdotes, short sketches and accounts of first-hand travel experiences of the writers, these volumes sought to present India and its people to readers back home in Britain. This paper shows how British colonial ideology shaped the representations of India and its people in these books. It specifically foregrounds how, in depicting India, both writers highlighted those aspects of Indian cultural and religious life that foreigners usually found disagreeable. It is argued that they did this to construct a vision of India which seemed to call for urgent reforms. This in turn helped them vindicate British colonialism in India, which both authors presented as being benign and reformative in nature. The paper thus demonstrates that these volumes were not mere innocuous travelogues, but works complicit in the colonial project of dominance and control.

Keywords: Colonialism, Caunter, Bacon, *Oriental Annual*, Representation.

Introduction

Between 1834 and 1840, a series of seven volumes entitled *The Oriental Annual* was published in England. Bearing anecdotes, narrative accounts and sketches, these books sought to present a first-hand account of India and its inhabitants to the reading public in Britain. This paper examines how this series represented Indian life and culture. It also tries to reveal how colonial ideology and politics influenced such representations.

Reverend John Hobart Caunter was the author of all but the last two volumes, which were penned by Thomas Bacon. The aim of the volumes, as stated in the first 1834 volume, was “to blend entertainment with information” in an attempt to provide “an insight into the habits, manners, and national prejudices of a remote and extraordinary people” (Caunter, 1834: n.p.). The original plan was to make every three consecutive volumes form a “distinct series” (Caunter, 1835: v). These were to appear annually as long as the series was in demand (Caunter, 1835: vi). But as already noted, only seven volumes were published; which probably indicates that the public did not retain their interest in these for long.¹ Barring the 1837 volume, which tells the story of Amir Taimur and his descendant Babar, all the other volumes concentrate on India. Hence, these volumes were all subtitled *Scenes in India*. The subtitle of the final volume was slightly altered. It was styled – *Containing a series of Tales, Legends and Historical Romances*. The work was later renamed *The Orientalist*. Engravings and sketches for the first five volumes were provided by William Daniell.² William Finden and Edward Francis Finden engraved the final two (1839 and 1840) volumes. The sketches for the 1839 volume were provided by miscellaneous artists including Bacon himself. The sketches for the final volume were produced by Thomas Bacon and Captain Philip Meadows Taylor.³

Brief introductions to the authors of these volumes are necessary before we take up these works for analysis. Of the two, Caunter was more famous in his days. Rev. John Hobart Caunter (1794 – 1851) was a poet and author of considerable repute. The Bengali author Banoyarilal Ray’s *Jayabati: Arthat Citorer Itibrttabises* (1865) is based on a tale from Caunter’s *Romance of History: India* (1836). This shows that at least some educated Indians of that period were familiar with his writings. Early in life, he joined the East India Company’s army and came to India as a cadet in 1809. His impressions of India and life in the 34th Foot are recorded in the

poem *The Cadet*.⁴ Later, he studied at Cambridge, becoming a Bachelor of Divinity in 1828. In 1848 he became the curator of Prittlewell, Essex - a position that he held till his death. Caunter has several works to his credit, which include *The Oriental Annual* (1834 – 1838), *St. Leon* (1835) - a poem, *Posthumous Records of a London Clergyman* (1835), *Romance of History: India* in three volumes - a series of historical romances (1836), *The Fellow Commoner* (1836) - a novel, *The Island Bride* - a poem in six cantos, *The Poetry of Pentateuch* in two volumes (1839), and *Illustrations of the Five Books of Moses* in two volumes (1847). Besides these, he wrote several monographs on theology.⁵

Even in his times, the reputation of Thomas Bacon never spread beyond a small circle. Bacon was a native of Redlands, Berkshire. He served as a lieutenant in the Bengal Horse Artillery. He was an artist of some repute and a member of the Society of Antiquarians. Apart from *The Oriental Annual* (1839 and 1840), his only other work that has survived is *First Impressions and Studies from Nature in Hindostan* in two volumes (1837). The latter records his experiences in Bengal and the Doab.

It is a well-established fact that a close relationship between colonialism and travel writing existed in the nineteenth century. These two drew strength from each other. Western travellers were backed by the strength of the empire. They, in return, offered valuable ethnographic and cultural information about foreign societies to the public at home. They thereby participated in shaping economic and political futures for the lands they visited. Behind the production of an enormous mass of travel literature in nineteenth-century Britain, Rana Kabbani sees “a frenzied attempt” to know the world that Britain was in the process of conquering. She justly argues:

To write literature of travel cannot but imply a colonial relationship. The claim is that one travels to learn, but really, one travels to exercise power over land, women, and people. It is commonplace of Orientalism that the West knows more about the East than the East knows about itself (Kabbani 10).

Often, the writers of these travelogues consciously involved themselves in the imperial project. The bleak pictures of the lives of the colonized people they drew were aimed at justifying European imperialism in Asia, Africa and Australia. The binary opposition between the West and the rest can be found in these works. Resemblance to Europe denoted progress, while to be less like it was to remain in a state of inferiority. In her illuminating essay “Constructing Cultures: The Politics of Travellers’ Tales”, Susan Bassnett rightly points out that cartographers, translators and travel writers were never “innocent producers of texts”. She argues that “The works they create are part of a process of manipulation that shapes and conditions our attitudes to other cultures while purporting to be something else” (Bassnett 99). In such travelogues, one may always observe the formation of cultural stereotypes. There are usually layers of subtexts beneath the innocent narratives and tour diaries.

With this understanding of nineteenth-century European travel literature, one may turn to *The Oriental Annual[s]*. The following section shows how these volumes, which were for the most part framed as personal travel experiences of the authors, strove to advance British colonialism in India. They once again show how travel writing served colonialism in the nineteenth century.

Responses to Indian life and culture in *The Oriental Annual[s]*

It needs to be mentioned right at the outset that the travelogues of Caunter and Bacon contain much more than discussions on Indian cultures. They also give vivid descriptions of Indian flora

and fauna and depict the varieties of Indian wildlife with scientific precision. But these are beyond the scope of the present discussion.

It is likewise necessary to point out beforehand that Bacon's volumes do not portray Indian social life in detail. He is more interested in Indian architecture and legends. We must remember that Bacon wrote the final volumes of a popular series. Maybe there was little left for him to comment on after all that Caunter wrote. It is Caunter's narratives which engage our attention the most.

To understand *The Oriental Annual*[s] better, it is useful to invoke Elleke Boehmer's concept of 'colonialist literature'. Boehmer makes a distinction between 'colonial literature' - a general category which includes writings by both the colonizer and the colonized - and 'colonialist literature'. 'Colonialist literature' is written solely by the imperialists. Boehmer writes, "it was literature written by and for colonizing Europeans about non-European lands dominated by them" (3). Since it embodied the colonizers' point of view, it was "informed by theories concerning the superiority of European culture and the rightness of empire" (Boehmer 3). The travelogues of Bacon and Caunter belong to this class of writing. They stress the negative aspects of Indian culture more than the positive. At times, the works of Bacon and Caunter appear as unvarnished apologetics for colonialism.

In his volumes of *The Oriental Annual*, Rev. Caunter seems to campaign in favour of the colonial mission of civilization. His missionary leanings coloured his views and perceptions. For we find him choosing Hindu rituals and practices as the main targets of his attacks. In denouncing Hindu customs, Caunter particularly singles out those social evils which plagued Hindu society at that period such as *sati* pratha, female infanticide and annual ritual suicide in

front of the chariot of Lord Jagannath. Though such practices may justly deserve criticism, it would be wrong to think that benevolence was the only thing which motivated the author to condemn them. Nor was he driven by simple religious bigotry. While ranting against these deplorable practices, he also tries to tacitly garner support for the British government in India by presenting it as the saviour of the people. Thus, one finds him eulogizing colonial administrators like Jonathan Duncan for putting a stop to the practice of female infanticide then prevalent among the Rajputs (Caunter, 1838: 134).⁶ One thing which recurs in his work is the “rescue script” – the colonial topos of ‘white men rescuing brown women from brown men’.⁷ Like many Britons of his times, he believed that Hindu women will remain ever grateful to British rule in India for putting a stop to the practice of *sati*. Another colonial topos which appears in his writings is that of the lustful Indian ascetics sexually exploiting women.⁸ Caunter condemns the Hindu ascetics for coercing the superstitious Hindu wives into cohabiting with them (Caunter, 1838: 132). Calling for the colonial government’s intervention, he pleads “When will these miserable delusions cease in a country so extensively governed by a Christian people? It is time that a change should be wrought ...” (Caunter, 1838: 132). Characteristically for a colonizer, Caunter chooses to forget that moral laxity is not peculiar to practitioners of any specific religion and that such instances can be found even among his coreligionists.

Despite admiring a few Hindu tenets, Caunter bemoans what he perceives as the state of degradation into which the Hindu religion had seemingly fallen into. As a Protestant Christian priest, he came to abhor aspects of Hinduism like polytheism and idol worship. He considers these to be later developments that destroyed “the purity of primitive worship” (Caunter, 1835: 227). It is to be noted that he was not the only British writer of his times to think in this way. In his book *Representations of India, 1740 – 1840* Amal Chatterjee distinguishes between two

classes of colonial thinkers, one belonging to the “primitive” and the other to the “degenerate” school. While the “primitive school” of thinkers argued that Hinduism was essentially a primitive barbarous religion, the “degenerate school” felt that at some remote past Hinduism was “more moral, even ‘glorious’” though it had fallen in later times (Chatterjee 88). Caunter’s statements show that he espoused the “degenerate” line of thinking identified by Chatterjee. However, in these volumes, Caunter targets not only the Hindu religion but also its practitioners. In doing this, he exposes the racism which covertly informed his thinking. Particularly, as the upholders of Hindu religious practices, the Brahmins come under his attack. He criticizes them for their avarice. In the 1835 volume, Caunter narrates an incident which, he claims, reveals the “equivocal casuistry of the mercenary Hindoo” (Caunter, 1835: 97). He informs that he once wanted to buy the image of a deity from a temple and requested the Brahmin priest to sell it. While the latter refused to sell the image of his deity to a non-Hindu, he dropped the hint that the author could appropriate the image on his initiative. After Caunter acts on this suggestion, the Brahmin priest accepts the coins that were offered to him as the price of the image (Caunter, 1835: 97 – 98). Based on this unremarkable incident, Caunter generalizes that the Brahmins are essentially hypocritical and greedy in nature. One may note here how he blows a trivial incident out of proportion to draw a general conclusion from one single piece of insufficient evidence. His sweeping condemnation of the Brahmins shows how racism informed his writings.

Hindus from almost all parts of India come under Caunter’s attack. The nature of these attacks shows that they were not fueled by religious bigotry but by racism and xenophobia. He finds all “the tribes of Bengalese”, “from Calcutta to Hurdwar”, to be “notoriously licentious in their habits” (Caunter, 1838: 202). The Hindu society of Malabar with its five castes – Brahmins, Nairs, Tiars, Malears and Poliars - appears equally obnoxious to him (Caunter, 1838: 158 – 163).

But it is the Hindu money-lenders of Malabar whom he finds insufferable. “They are fond of litigation almost to idolatry”, he states (Caunter, 1838: 156). In the following passage, Caunter tries to show how the money lender’s very physical appearance reveals the evil inside him:

...the portrait of a Malabar Hindoo well known on the coast... as a wealthy money-lender, and possessing an uncommonly keen sagacity in his vocation. This is sufficiently indicated in his small, bright, calculating eye. The distended nostril and compressed lip bespeak active thought and rapid conclusions; the immense expansion of the forehead would betoken a sufficient mass of brains to devise plans of profit; while the strong severe features bespeak a forward determination to execute (Caunter, 1838: 156).

It is hard to miss the covert racism that underlies this anatomizing. Here Caunter adopts the well-known tactics of the phrenologists who used their pseudo-scientific theories to justify White supremacy. Nor is he sympathetic to the tribal people of India. He finds the ‘hill men’ of North India servile, deceptive and cunning and observes, “They have no dignity of character, being utterly without honour or principle” (Caunter, 1835: 40). Even the Muslims do not escape his criticism. They appear lascivious to him. But Caunter admires their martial prowess. He is also favourably disposed towards other warrior factions of India like the Rajputs and the Gorkhas. His reason is not difficult to guess. Their martial prowess made them valuable to the British colonizers, who often employed them in their armies.

Another feature of Indian social life which drew Caunter’s denouncement is the caste system among the Hindus. He presents a heart-rendering account of the pariahs or the untouchables, who live on the fringes of the Indian caste society (Caunter, 1835: 173 – 176). Caunter writes that the pariahs were often forced to abandon human societies and inhabit the

jungles. Sometimes, famished pariahs would be forced to feed on human carcasses floating on rivers (Caunter, 1835: 176). This, of course, is an exaggeration. Caunter's humanism certainly deserves one's approbation. At the same time, one is left to wonder how much of it is righteous indignation at human suffering and how much of it is propaganda by an apologist for colonialism.

Caunter also lashes out at the popular forms of entertainment then prevalent in India, particularly animal fights. He condemns the Muslim princes of India for their partiality to such vapid shows (Caunter, 1838: 109). He criticizes such spectacles on the ground of inhumanity. He also writes that European spectators are likely to experience more distress than enjoyment at such sports (Caunter, 1838: 111 – 112). Ironically, bullfighting was still prevalent in Europe during the author's times - a fact that he conveniently ignores. Caunter likewise attacks popular music, which he feels would stun a European ear. According to him, "The vernacular language of the savage is not apparently more rough and barbarous than the vernacular music of the Hindoos..." (Caunter, 1835: 54). However, he praises the accomplishments of trained Indian musicians (Caunter, 1838: 55).

The *zenana* or the harem is another aspect of Muslim social life, which Caunter condemns as evil. According to Rana Kabbani, Oriental interiors presented "a catalogue of goods, a showpiece of commodities that the viewers might covet" (70). The Victorians had an ambivalent attitude towards the harem. It had an erotic appeal which they both liked and criticized. Large sections of the 1835 and 1838 volumes of *The Oriental Annual* are dedicated to discussions on the harem. We may examine one such harem-scene from the 1838 volume:

The engraving represents a Mohammedan of rank receiving a visit from one of his favourite women, who, according to the custom of the East, among the votaries of the sensual Prophet of Mecca, is presenting him with a rose, as a pledge of her affection (Caunter, 1838: 53).

The stock image of the lascivious Muslim appears here. Caunter finds “the pure impulse of affection” to be absent from Muslim harems (Caunter, 1838: 52). He sees the women as ‘unhappy victims’ of their husband’s pleasure. They are caressed in youth, neglected in mature years and despised in their old age. Such depictions inflated the egotism of the Victorian males, who looked upon themselves as civilized admirers of women. At the same time, these also titillated Western readers with glimpses into the tabooed territories of ‘Oriental’ sexuality and sexual license. A story, which appears in the same volume, is meant to highlight the sexual depravity of the Indian Muslims. A ‘Mussulmaun’ forcefully abducts the wife of a Brahmin, whom he keeps imprisoned in his harem as a sex slave. At first, he treats her with some affection. However, the “mercurial Mohammedan” simply throws her out of the house when the ‘Bramhinee’ loses the child she had with him and becomes disconsolate with grief. Her original husband, the Brahmin, receives her back after she undergoes a purification ritual (Caunter, 1838: 164 – 196). The story serves two purposes. While railing at the supposed lasciviousness of the Indian Muslims, it furtively titillates the male Victorian readers who could conveniently enjoy such sexual fantasies because they were remotely located. Secondly, by showing a glimpse of the disorder in Indian society, it could covertly justify the necessity of prolonging colonial rule in India. It is also to be noted that Caunter narrates this tale in the guise of an ethnographer; since, in his proper role of a ‘respectable’ priest, he was not at liberty to narrate such a salacious tale.

Thus, ethnography here provides a convenient ruse for satisfying the libidinal fantasies of British men.

Till now, the article has only highlighted Caunter's criticism of Indian people and culture. However, to do him justice, one needs to acknowledge that there are aspects of Indian life that the author finds appealing. His censure of idolatry did not eclipse his admiration for ancient Hindu religion and culture. Though condemning popular Hinduism for its sanction of idolatry, he finds "many axioms of a high morality" in the ancient form of Hinduism. He warns his countrymen:

We should form altogether a very unjust estimate of the intellectual qualifications of Hindoo teachers if we tested them by those vulgar superstitions which are constantly presented to the traveller's eye in their numerous temples (Caunter, 1835: 225).

Caunter finds aspects of Hindu philosophy so appealing that he declares, "some of the doctrines taught in these heathen tabernacles are such as would not disgrace a Christian preacher" (Caunter, 1835: 99). He finds a few Hindu *shastras* to be "second only to the oracles of inspiration" (Caunter, 1835: 224). The monotheism propagated by the *Gita* and the *Upanisads* naturally finds favour with a Christian priest like him. He declares that Shri Krishna was no ordinary teacher and quotes freely from Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*⁹ to prove his point (Caunter, 1835: 224 – 225). Caunter's panegyrics on Hindu philosophy once again reinforce the understanding that his attacks on Hindu religious practices and practitioners were less informed by religious bigotry and more by racial chauvinism.

Hindu philosophy apart, Caunter admires some other achievements of the ancient Hindus. He praises the solemnity of Hindu architecture and describes many famous Hindu temples in his

work. The Vishnu temple at Madanpur near Gaya captivates his imagination (Caunter, 1835: 222). Though he finds the temple at Benaras inferior in structure to other Hindoo temples, “the air of simple antiquity about it” makes it agreeable to his eyes (Caunter, 1835: 189). Caunter also praises the sculptures adorning the walls of the temple at Bodh Gaya, which have “more grace than the Egyptian, and more action than the Greek...” (Caunter, 1835: 231).

The proficiency exhibited by the ancient Hindus in the field of musical science drew the reverence of Caunter. Going against the popular opinion prevalent in his days that music came to India from Egypt via Greece, he tried to prove that music was already present in India during that period (Caunter, 1838: 62). The essay on music by Soma, which belongs to great antiquity, forms the basis of his belief (Caunter, 1838: 62 - 66). Caunter’s love for ancient Hindu culture can be best described as *Indomania*. Like the British Orientalists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, he believed in the theory of Indo-European kinship. “Indomania”, as Thomas R. Trautmann defines it, was “an enthusiasm for India that was entertained by a few very well-educated Britons, most of them male...” (63). He makes it clear that such enthusiasm did not promote affection between Britons and Indians. Rather, “British Orientalists devised a theory of their own activities that involved *claims* about promoting affection between ruler and the ruled and a political *rhetoric of love*” (Trautmann 18). The glorification of an ancient Hindu past served an important political purpose. While the Hindu age was seen as the Golden Age, colonialist historians identified a succeeding Muslim age which was presented as the Dark Age. British colonizers professed it their mission to restore the Golden Age of India. It was their apologia for colonialism. Caunter’s admiration for aspects of *ancient* Indian culture fits well with this paradigm. In praising aspects of ancient Indian culture, he was not deviating from colonial politics. Rather, by comparing ancient India with contemporary India, he was validating the

colonial mission of civilization which ultimately served as a pretext for prolonging British rule in India.

If Caunter displays *Indomania*, Bacon exhibits what Trautmann calls *Indophobia*. His volumes are characterized by extreme antagonism towards the Hindus. Bacon finds them “inert”. He writes that “low cunning”, “superstition” and “fulsome sycophancy” are inseparable from the “Hindoo Character”. The Hindus appear to him as “more addicted to the marvelous than any other nation upon earth” (Bacon, 1840: 229). Unlike Caunter, he does not respect Hindu philosophy. “The whole language of the Hindoos”, Bacon declares, “has become a heap of allegories”. He observes, “no fable is too absurd, no farce too monstrous for their belief” (Bacon, 1840: 230). Bacon’s antipathy towards the Hindus goes to such a ludicrous extreme that he is led to think that the Burga tribes, being an “industrious race”, couldn’t have sprung from the “inert Hindoos” (Bacon, 1840: 205). One notes here how he conflates religion with peoplehood and essentializes based on imagined characteristics.

The description of the battle of Gwalior that appears in Bacon’s 1840 volume gives evidence of his faith in the superiority of the British race. He mentions that despite enormous difficulties the British force conquered the fort in just forty-eight hours. He observes, “with British troops and British commanders, increased difficulties only give rise to renewed ardour and determination” (Bacon, 1840: 94). Bacon also praises the leniency shown by his countrymen towards the vanquished Indians, who, he reports, were treated with compassion. Indians, in contrast, are described as being devoid of such humane feelings. Bacon narrates several stories that focus on the hard-heartedness of the Indians. In his work one witnesses how the colonizers formed an exalted self-identity for themselves at the expense of the colonized.

The only thing that Bacon finds praiseworthy in India is Indian architecture. He describes monuments, palaces and temples in great detail. Though despising Indian cities for their filthiness, Bacon likes the Indian “bazaars” (markets). He writes, “The bazaars are, perhaps, the most entertaining resort for the visitor, in all Oriental cities” (Bacon, 1840: 230). The sumptuous articles displayed for sale at these bazaars present a feast to his eyes.

Finally, I would like to point out several amusing misrepresentations which appear in the works of Caunter and Bacon. Such misrepresentations usually originate in ignorance. These show that the colonial travel writers rarely took pains to understand what they saw, despite assuming the air of an expert. At times, they even made-up fantastic tales to please their readers. For instance, Caunter claims to have seen “deformed and loathsome relics of idolaters” in graveyards (Caunter, 1836: 110). This is impossible because the Hindus cremate the dead, and people from other faiths will never dream of adorning graveyards with statues of Hindu Gods. Caunter makes another mistake when, while describing ‘Oude’, he confuses Lord Rama with Lord Parasurama (Caunter, 1838: 124 – 125). While both characters appear in the *Ramayana*, the latter was never the king of Oude or Ayodhya. He was the warrior sage in Hindu mythology.¹⁰ It was not that Caunter did not know the true story of Lord Rama. In the same volume, one finds a passage from Hamilton’s *A Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Description of Hindostan and the Adjacent Countries* which narrates the story of Lord Rama, the prince of Ayodhya. Then how could the author make such a surprising mistake? It appears to me that Caunter’s interest in Hinduism and Hindu literature was only superficial. Being indifferent, he committed this blunder. Caunter also cites a mistaken account of the *Paramahansas* from Moore’s *The Hindu Pantheon* (Caunter, 1835: 176). Moore had written that the ‘Paramahansas’ consume human flesh. But the sect he was referring to is the ‘Aghories’. *Paramhansa* or *Paramahamsa*, literally

“supreme swan”, stands for “a perfectly liberated one” and is used as an honorific title for advanced *yogis* (Werner 78). They have nothing to do with cannibalism. Facts about Buddhism are also erroneously presented by Caunter. He mentions that like Christ, Buddha was born of a virgin (Caunter, 1835: 237). Caunter further asserts that for the Buddhists *Sunya* is the ‘Supreme Being’ (Caunter, 1835: 240). In reality, *sunya* or *shunya* is not the name of a deity. The word simply means void or nothingness.¹¹ Bacon commits a similar error when he states that the Jains aspire to be absorbed into “the essence of the Divinity” (Bacon, 1840: 110). Jains, however, do not believe in an omnipotent supreme being.¹²

Conclusion

Our survey of the volumes of *The Oriental Annual* by Rev. Hobart Caunter and Thomas Bacon thus shows that these works were never innocent and innocuous travelogues. Both writers were indeed casual onlookers with no intention of indulging in an in-depth study of Indian life and culture. Consequently, one may argue that their biased views on aspects of Indian life and culture may be overlooked. However, it is also to be kept in mind that their accounts of India, no matter how much shallow they might appear now, were meant to promote certain kinds of prejudices in their (white) readers. These writers were not simply travellers perambulating a country. Rather, they were authors complicit in the colonial project who saw everything with the colonizers’ eyes. To understand such complex things as societies and cultures, both intellectual and emotional involvements are required. The narratives of Caunter and Bacon show that these authors lacked these traits.

Notes

1. I find this particularly strange as the final 1840 volume was favourably reviewed in some British journals, like the *Dublin University Magazine*, the *Monthly Magazine*, and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*. It is possible that these journals did not correctly reflect public opinion. It is also probable that publishers had lost interest in this scheme.
2. William Daniell (1769 – 1837) was a famous landscape painter who travelled extensively in India and painted Indian sceneries.
3. Captain Philip Meadows Taylor (1808 – 1876) is remembered today for his novels, particularly the seminal *Confessions of a Thug* (1839). But he was also an amateur artist, a fact that is not widely known. His *Sketches in the Deccan* were published in 1837.
4. This was published in two volumes in 1814.
5. For the biographical sketch of Caunter, I am indebted to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and *Modern English Biography*.
6. Jonathan Duncan (1756 – 1811) was Governor of Bombay from 1795 to 1811. He is remembered for stamping out the practice of female infanticide while working as the Resident at Benares (1788 – 1795).
7. In her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak uses the sentence “White men saving brown women from brown men” (93).
8. In British colonial literature on India, Hindu *sadhus* were often depicted as sexual predators. One may for instance check Benita Parry’s *Delusions and Discoveries* for a brief discussion (70 – 79).
9. Sir Charles Wilkins (1749 – 1836) first translated the *Bhagavad Gita* into English. It was published in 1785.

10. Lord Parasurama is recognized as the sixth incarnation or *avatar* of Lord Vishnu. For a brief account, one may see Werner (79).
11. Caunter here displays a mistaken understanding of Nagarjuna's doctrine of emptiness (*sunyavada*). It also needs to be pointed out that while the word *sunya* literally means the void or nothing (Humphreys 210), the idea of *sunyata* has been explained in different ways. Perhaps, the best definition is provided by Ananda Mishra who defines the idea of nothingness or *sunyata* as the “unspeakable” (48).
12. Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Dutta point out that, “There is no place in Jainism for a supreme creative spirit” (81).

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